

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, December 23, 2011

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE posts application for [Green Ribbon Schools](#) award, due February 1
2. [Virtual Learning](#) conference scheduled for February 11
3. New [director](#) named at RIDE
4. [Next Field Memo](#) to come January 6

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

5. Information provided on HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C prevention, [sexuality education](#)
6. Annual [School Health Report](#) forms to be posted in January

Action Item Calendar

Today (December 23): [Technology Capacity](#) Survey due
Today (December 23): [Presidential Scholars](#) nominations due
January 6: Costs report on [special education](#) due
February 1: Green Ribbon Schools nomination deadline (see below)
February 11: Statewide conference on virtual learning (see below)
June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE posts application for Green Ribbon Schools award, due February 1

As you may know, the U.S. Department of Education has recently announced a new initiative: Green Ribbon Schools. Modeled after Blue Ribbon Schools Program, the Green Ribbon Schools award will recognize exemplary achievement in environmental impact, health, and environmental education.

The U.S. Department of Education is looking to identify schools that have the least impact on the environment, the most positive impact on the health of students and staff, and the most effective preparation of students for careers and citizenship in the 21st century.

As Education Secretary Arne **Duncan** has said:

Green schools are critical to schools' fiscal health and our nation's economy. ... Environmental education and green facilities schools are as vital to individual students as they are to their schools and the nation. High standards of nutrition, fitness, and facility conditions improve student and staff health, attendance and productivity, and enhance achievement and engagement. ... Green schools support our shared objectives of well-rounded education, healthy students, and STEM achievement.

I am pleased to let you know that Rhode Island will participate in the Green Ribbon Schools program.

Schools that would like to be nominated for this award must complete this on-line application by **February 1**:

<http://www.surveymzmo.com/s3/744528/Green-Ribbon-Schools-Rhode-Island-Application>

From the pool of applicants, RIDE will submit up to four nominations to the U.S. Department of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education will invite winners of the Green Ribbon to participate in a national ceremony. We look forward to having many schools apply in the inaugural year of this prestigious program.

If you have questions about the Green Ribbon Schools program, you may call Joseph da Silva, our School Construction Coordinator, at 222-4294, or e-mail him at Joseph.daSilva@ride.ri.gov.

For more information on Green Ribbon Schools, see:

www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools.

Also, you might be interested in the latest in a series of U.S. Department of Education blog posts on the Green Ribbon Schools' pilot year, "Sorry, Kermit -- It Can Be Easy Being Green" (<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/12/sorry-kermit-it-can-be-easy-being-green/>), which observes that every school can take simple steps to save energy, reduce costs, increase health and wellness, and offer effective environmental education.

2. Virtual Learning conference scheduled for February 11

In a Field Memo earlier this month (December 2), I shared with you the news that we are moving forward with our proposal to transform education in Rhode Island through innovative uses of technology.

As you may know, we have applied for a grant to "revise and create state policy and practice to provide support to our districts...in implementing virtual-learning experiences" and "to support the redesign of a school that uses technology as the catalyst for transformation." The school

receiving this support would serve as a “proof point” site for public education across Rhode Island.

We intend to open up a competitive-bid process for proposals from LEAs interested in revising and creating policy at the local level to support digital learning and innovative practices. This process will encourage:

- using innovative blended-learning models through 1:1 computing;
- developing or adopting digital curricula, including the next generation of virtual learning (VL) environments such as gaming and immersive VL;
- creating expanded learning opportunities that may extend school days;
- designing flexible scheduling for both educators and students; and
- ensuring articulation of lessons learned across all schools within a district.

On February 11 at Rhode Island College, we will hold a statewide conference on virtual learning for all LEAs; please hold this date and plan to join us at this important event. Confirmed speakers include national leaders on blended learning. Conference participants may include superintendents, assistant superintendents, school administrators, technology directors, teacher leaders, school-committee members, and other interested district stakeholders.

We are planning to request proposals early next year, so we strongly encourage staff members from any LEA interested in submitting a proposal to attend the conference. We will have more information to announce early next month about the request for proposals and about the conference

I hope you will be interested in applying for this support and that you will embrace these initiatives that will prepare our students for success.

3. New director named at RIDE

Michael Ferry joined RIDE this week as our new Knowledge Officer, overseeing the Office of Data, Analysis, and Research. For the past four years, Michael has been the coordinator of instructional technology at the Woonsocket Education Department, where he has been responsible for the development and administration of the Feinstein e-Learning Academy. For the past 11 years, he has also been the president and the lead trainer for the Blackstone Valley Rivers Project. Michael has also taught science at Woonsocket High School, and he has been an instructor in the Virtual Learning Academy at the school. We are pleased that Michael has joined the RIDE team, and I know he will be in contact with you regularly as he oversees our work on data collection and analysis.

4. Next Field Memo to come January 6

Because of the school vacation schedule and the holidays, my next Field Memo will come after the New Year, so I want to take a moment to wish you a festive, joyous, healthy holiday season and New Year – and I’m truly looking forward to continuing our work together on so many exciting initiatives in 2012.

From RIDE:

5. Information provided on HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C prevention, sexuality education

Please see this notice from our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

For your information, here are links to the several policies, policy guidelines, and updated information pertaining to HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C prevention and to sexuality education:

[A Policy Statement of The State Board of Regents Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation](#)

The Red Book - Exposure to Blood on the Job: What School Employees Need to Know
Downloadable copies are available at:

<http://www.neahin.org/resources/2004%20Red%20Book.pdf> English

<http://www.neahin.org/resources/2004%20Spanish%20Red%20Book.pdf> Spanish

[RI State Board of Regents endorsed HIV/Hepatitis Policy Guidelines](#)

Additional information and all of the documents above are available on our Coordinated School Health Web sites:

www.thriveri.org and <http://www.thriveri.org/components/hiv.html> .

Please feel free to contact Annie Silvia, at 222-8951 or AnneMarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov, for additional information.

6. Annual School Health Report forms to be posted in January

Please see this notice from our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

The *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs*, Section 2.5, requires all districts and nonpublic-school authorities to submit a report pertaining to the school or district health program to the Commissioner of Education and the Director of Health on an annual basis. The Annual School Health Report provides a standardized template to fulfill this reporting requirement and allows the RIDE and the Department of Health to monitor school and district compliance with school health-related statutes, regulations, and protocols that ensure the health and safety of students and staff at all Rhode Island schools.

The Annual School Health Report template will be available through eRIDE next month (January). You will receive an e-mail notification from RIDE when the report is open for completion and submission via eRIDE.

For a [preview](#) of the Annual School Health Report and for assistance in understanding what will be required, please see the [Annual School Health Report Tutorial](#).

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday January 3, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>